

Thinking distortions

The following are a list of distorted thinking patterns

All or none thinking/black and white: You see things in black and white categories. For example, because you felt uncomfortable at one point while you were hanging out with your friends and you decide that the whole experience is a bad one. Or you think, "I made a mistake on that...the whole job is ruined."

Mental Filter (Focusing on the negative): You pick out a single detail and dwell on it exclusively, or make unwarranted conclusions. For example, after not receiving a promised phone call from a friend, you conclude, "They don't really care about me." Or while talking to someone you are momentarily at a loss for words at one point. Looking back on the whole experience you think: "I had nothing to say".

Overgeneralization: You see a single event as a never-ending pattern. For example, "I didn't handle that interview very well... I never cope at interviews."

Magnification/Minimization: You exaggerate the importance of things (such as your own goof up or someone else's achievement) or you inappropriately shrink things until they appear tiny (your own desirable qualities or the other person's imperfections). This is also called the "binocular trick".

Emotional Reasoning: You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel bad so things must be going badly." "I feel bad so it must be obvious to others."

Discounting or Disqualifying the Positive: You reject successful experiences by insisting they don't count for some reason or another. In this way, you can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your every day experiences. For example, despite being nervous you give a talk to your workmates, but discount it by saying, "There weren't that many people, so it doesn't really count." Or you discount the achievement by saying something like, "Anyone could do that".